

## **ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2021-2027**

Kolping University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter KUAS) attaches great importance to the development of internationalization in the fields of teaching, research and administration, promoting cooperation with higher education institutions, researchers international networks, enterprises and other partners around the world. International cooperation is very important in improving the quality of studies and work, mobilizing national and international resources for the implementation of joint projects and research. It will also contribute to the development of intercultural competence of all participants, increase of tolerance, and better understanding of multiculturalism.

Being in close connection to the international Kolping Society/Community, KUAS strives for solidarity, social responsibility engages in joint educational and social projects and further strengthens the development of an international and intercultural area of study process, research and administration.

KUAS envisages the following strategic goals of internationalization development, set in “KUAS Internationalization Strategy 2020-2025”, which will help to implement the strategic directions of KUAS development provided for in the institutional strategy:

1. Embedding the culture of global understanding, sustainability, multiculturalism, tolerance and inclusiveness into overall activities of KUAS, carried out by administration, academic staff, students, graduates and social partners.
2. Promoting international mobilities of students, graduates, teachers, administration and researchers for study, teaching, training, and research purposes.
3. Internationalizing of the study process by preparing study programmes to be implemented at the international level and ensuring the readiness of the academic staff to work with foreign students and colleagues.
4. Promoting and expanding international scientific research cooperation and research activities on the international level.
5. Enriching the internationalization of studies and research through strong strategic partnerships.

KUAS will strengthen its culture by the development of student and staff intercultural competences paying great emphasis on multiculturalism, tolerance, transparency, and equitable access and inclusion of students and staff. Intercultural dimension will be integrated into the whole study process. Much attention is paid to the development of intercultural communication - the ability to communicate with people from different cultures (views, values, religions, etc.) / in a multicultural environment.

From 2020 greater emphasis is being placed on digitalization of administration and study process by encouraging students, teachers and staff to reduce paperwork and “switch” to electronic version of documentation video lectures, etc. including mobility management. To achieve this,

trainings for relevant staff are being organized; relevant documents, information system, and platform are being created. KUAS implements principles of sustainable development, paying especial attention to environmental protection by approving “KUAS Environmental Protection Policy” and following its requirements. Participation in the programme will contribute to the development of on-line teaching: exchanging good practice from partner institutions abroad, sharing KUAS experience with others. This will increase the technological proficiency needed in today's world.

KUAS is providing academic support services and non-academic advice for incoming students, teachers, researchers and administration personnel using the existing services of the International Office, Student Service Centre, “Student to Student” mentoring system and academic centres. KUAS will create and provide more attractive and interesting courses in English, regularly updating the course catalogue and providing information for incoming students on the website. The curricula and teaching methods at KUAS will be gradually internationalized in cooperation with local and international partners. KUAS is implementing “Student to Student” initiative which in 2021 will be expanded including graduate-mentors. Graduates will mentor both local students (e.g. on career and other issues) and incoming students. KUAS has good relations with social partners and many years of successful collaboration. Social partners contribute to the widening of visiting staff and students’ knowledge about the Lithuanian history, culture, and traditions, introduce real practical / professional activities i.e. show how theory and science is integrated into practice. Partners benefit from mutual exchange of good experience.

KUAS will ensure that all students and staff, who plan exchanges abroad, receive advice on academic and non-academic matters, ensure that staff is given recognition for their teaching and training activities undertaken during the mobility, ensure inclusion of participants with fewer opportunities, and ensure the ability of graduates to train and work at home and abroad.

It is important that researchers are motivated and supported to participate in collaborative research projects at the international level. KUAS encourages young teachers and researchers to attend summer schools abroad, promotes and supports students’ research work. One of KUAS strategic goals is the development of applied research activities, and participation in the Programme will contribute to its implementation through international research, projects, cooperating with foreign HE and other institutions.

The goal of KUAS is to improve the quality of studies by constantly cooperating with foreign institutions and learning from each other. The aim is also to research and analyze the labour market in order the graduates find a suitable niche for them and corresponding to the completed studies. Participation in international mobilities gives wider understanding of the labor market in the intercultural context, helps to discover new niches in the professional field. Internationalization strategy of KUAS foresees increasing cooperation with strategic partners and participation in international networks including international Kolping networks.

KUAS is a member of such research networks as ERIS, The European Federation for Catholic Adult Education, European Educational Research Association – EERA, etc. The aim is to continue cooperation in existing research networks working in joint projects, participating in international conferences, and research and to further develop KUAS internationalization by joining new networks of international researchers.

KUAS has signed 20 inter-institutional cooperation agreements with European higher education institutions. Priority was given to have a limited number of strategic partners with whom KUAS had good relationship instead of a large number of agreements. KUAS is a small community based institution of higher education, whose goal is continuously strengthen the quality of studies and management. In the upcoming period KUAS will focus on the development of the existing partnerships through widening student and staff mobility, including blended mobility, short programmes, research, and by developing relationships with other key stakeholders and cross-sector cooperation, e.g. KUAS social partner institutions. Since KUAS provides theoretical knowledge and is practically oriented, it has several institutions and companies in Kaunas region as its social partners. Social partners share with KUAS their ideas on internationalization and on what kind of future employees they need and discuss what can be done separately and together.

KUAS will establish more partnerships with institutions from EU and outside of EU based on mutual understanding of our capabilities, priorities, objectives and values. It is planned to establish more partnerships with higher education institutions granting professional bachelor's degree. The academic staff from their individual links, through the existing partners, and networks, initiates many partnerships. Partnerships will be periodically reviewed to ensure that both partners meet their commitments and support KUAS strategic goals.

Until now, KUAS students often go to do internships at foreign partner institutions, however their motivation for studies abroad is rather low and a number of incoming students at KUAS is also limited. KUAS offers modules of study programs in English and regularly updates course catalogue on institutions website. With introduction of blended mobility, KUAS hopes to attract more students from abroad and our students especially those with fewer opportunities will be better motivated for studies. There are plans also to encourage KUAS students' mobilities for studies and incoming students' mobilities by providing support, which will come from KUAS sponsors and social partner institutions as well as graduates-mentors participants of the Programme. For outgoing students who go for studies reduction in tuition fees during the study period abroad is planned. Relations with the social partners are strong and agreements are signed on the internship of students from foreign partner institutions in the social partner institutions.

Each incoming student is registered in KUAS for the period of study and is treated the same ways as own students. Incoming students are not charged any tuition fees and the transcripts of records are issued for all incoming students. The outcomes from a learning period abroad of outgoing students are fully recognized on the basis of the Transcript of Records as established in *KUAS Procedure for Recognition of Study Results*. KUAS will increase the number of modules and courses in English available for local and international students. This will benefit to increase incoming mobility, and give possibility for KUAS students who do not study abroad to improve language skills and get English-taught experience.

KUAS is making an attempt to promote cooperation between higher education and business enterprises, thus increasing the employability of students not only in Lithuania but also abroad. Through these measures, KUAS contributes to the country's priorities to raise the economy and to promote the development of the society.

The *KUAS Internationalization Strategy* defines that main stakeholder groups (students, graduates, teachers, staff, and partners) will be involved and benefit. The most important target group is students. The main goals of student mobility are to acquire intercultural communication

skills, to improve their foreign language skills, to gain new learning skills, and to get acquainted with the education system of foreign countries as well as to get acquainted with career opportunities and new niches in the international arena. After Erasmus+ mobilities, KUAS students and graduates were offered jobs, and this shows that students' employability in the international and local labor market is expanding because employers take into account their international experience. Since information on study and training results undertaken during the student's mobility is included in the Diploma Supplement, the employer can see the student's international study or traineeship experience. Students, who gain international experience value themselves more, their confidence grows, so not only does their knowledge and skills expand, but they grow as personalities, their values such as greater tolerance, better understanding of otherness, greater social sensitivity, awareness of environmental issues, willingness for international volunteering also change.

Through international mobility activities (teaching, competence development, learning, conducting international research, participating in international projects, etc.) teachers also develop intercultural competence, widen their horizons and develop intercultural communication skills. After mobilities, they integrate the acquired experience into the study process: update study subjects, include new topics that correspond to the European and world trends, include new teaching / learning methods, and new assessment methods. Teachers also develop foreign language skills, which contribute to preparation to teach subjects in foreign languages at KUAS. Teachers' surveys and teachers' activity reports reflected that teachers are much more satisfied with their academic activities when they have the opportunity to participate in international mobilities.

Administrative staff, participating in international mobilities, develops intercultural competence, management and intercultural communication skills, establishes new professional relationships with international partners and expands the existing partnerships.

KUAS partners benefit by being invited to participate in seminars conducted by visiting experts and lecturers. Incoming students and staff visits social partners' institutions, where they get acquainted with professional activities and mutual learning takes place: they learn from each other's experience, make contacts useful for project activities and further cooperation. Social partners are involved into international practice-oriented research.

Quantitative indicators are based on the evaluation indicators of the study fields after the analysis of the number of mobilities (incoming - outgoing) during the last five years, taking into account the number of students, teachers and administrative staff planned in KUAS.

Indicators based on the size, previous experience and resources of the institution are the following:

- Number of new international partners: 2-3 per year.
- Number of involvement in international research networks: 1 per year
- Percentage of incoming students, compared to the total number of students: at least 5%
- Percentage of outgoing students and graduates, compared to the total number of students: at least 10 %
- Percentage of incoming staff, compared to the total number of staff: at least 30%
- Percentage of outgoing staff, compared to the total number of staff: at least 30 %

- KUAS aims to attract teachers from higher education institutions abroad so that each graduate has listened to at least one subject taught by an international expert-lecturer.
- KUAS aims to have at least 2 international studies each year, thus aiming to develop applied science in the international space.
- KUAS aims to participate at least in 2 international projects each year.

KUAS aims to have foreign experts (lecturers or practitioners) in the evaluation commissions for the defense of final theses and professional practice from 2021.

To assure quality of the implementation constant monitoring and evaluation will be performed by regular on-line surveys, feedback from participants, reports, dissemination of experience, etc.

Participation in international programmes helps KUAS integration into the development processes of European Higher Education; therefore, KUAS actively participates in the Erasmus+ Programme, seeking to improve the quality of studies by adopting good practices of foreign partners and ensuring that KUAS graduates meet needs of constantly changing labor market. In order to increase exchanges, KUAS will offer more international study programs for its students and will develop new study programs in English (e.g. Transport Logistics, Business and Social Innovations), will strengthen partnerships with institutions and enterprises to make more attractive traineeships for outgoing and incoming students.

Participation in the Erasmus+ Programme is considered as the main tool to achieve strategic goals: assurance of high quality teaching, research and management, promotion of students and staff mobility, strengthening and expansion of international partnerships, increased involvement in cooperation projects, and development of the region.